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EASTERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY
Charleston, Illinois

news

ART TATE, Assistant Director, University Relations
Office: (217) 581-5983 - Home: (217) 348-7553

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FILE COPY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

EIU GRANT PROGRAM TRAINS AREA PROFESSIONALS

CHARLESTON, IL.--Four Coles County residents are participating in a grant program at Eastern Illinois University that better prepares them to work with infants and toddlers with special needs and their families.

Sandy Boyer, Tammy Caldwell, and Ellen Johnson of Charleston, and Marilyn McBride of Mattoon are among 14 infant education specialists who are being trained at Eastern to work more effectively with infants and toddlers ages birth through two who are handicapped or at-risk for becoming handicapped.

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"Project BABIES," made possible by a \$63,937 grant from the U.S. Department of Education, gives individuals who already hold staff positions in early intervention programs an opportunity to upgrade their professional skills without disruption of family or work responsibilities.

Carolyn Cooper, EIU Associate Professor in the Department of Special Education and Project Director, said students are able to earn a Master of Science Degree in Education with an emphasis in infant and toddler early intervention through coursework and an intensive practicum experience.

"This is an innovative program designed to meet the needs of persons who are currently employed full-time and are thus unable to participate in traditional college programs," Cooper said.

Students may complete their coursework in either day long or weekend format, and practicums at sites within their regional area. Participants receive federally-funded stipends for tuition and fees.

"What's exciting about this program is the large geographical area Project BABIES serves. Our students represent 10 counties in Illinois from Coles to Williamson County in southern Illinois," Cooper said.

"Adults enrolled in the program come from varied backgrounds, including nursing, special education, psychology, home economics, elementary education and family guidance," Cooper added.

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GRANT PROGRAM

She said another unique aspect of the program is participants not only get "hands-on" experience working with children through practicum activities, but also work closely with their families, helping them acquire the resources they need to better meet their children's needs.